

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 112874
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FOR CARTER--SECRETARY'S PARTY--FROM PA

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT MARLISE SIMONS FRONT PAGE BYLINER
WASHINGTON POST TUESDAY MAY 17 HEADED ,PANAMA ACCEPTS U.S.
DEFENSE ROLE.'

2. PANAMA CITY, MAY 16 - A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE PANAMA CANAL
TREATY NEGOTIATIONS IS CONSIDERED NEAR, AS PANAMA MOVES
CLOSER TO ACCEPTING U.S. DEMANDS FOR A CONTINUING ROLE IN
DEFENDING THE WATERWAY AFTER IT PASSES UNDER PANAMANIAN
CONTROL.

3. IN A LENGTHY INTERVIEW, PANAMA'S STRONGMAN ORIG. GEN.
OMAR TORRIJOS SAID, "PANAMA CAN ACCEPT THE U.S. RIGHT TO
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 112874

INTERVENE AGAINST A THIRD COUNTRY TO PROTECT THE NEUTRALITY
OF THE CANAL.

4. "ABOVE ALL, THIS IS WHAT OUR LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS
AND ALLIES DEMAND. TO A GREAT EXTENT THEIR ECONOMIES DEPEND
ON T'E FREEDOM OF PASSAGE."

5. THE FORMULA DEFINING THE TERMS OF THE CANAL'S NEUTRALITY HAS BEEN THE MAIN OUTSTANDING POINT IN THE LATEST AND SUPPOSEDLY LAST, ROUND OF DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE BASIC ISSUES. AGREEMENT ON THE NEUTRALITY CLAUSE IS BELIEVED, THEREFORE, TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR THE NEW TREATY, WHICH HAS BEEN THE CAUSE OF CONSIDERABLE TENSION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES SINCE 1964.

6. UNTIL NOW PANAMA'S OFFICIAL NEGOTIATING POSITION HAS BEEN THAT UNDER THE NEW TREATY THE UNITED NATIONS SHOULD ACT AS GUARANTOR OF THE WATERWAY'S NEUTRALITY. WASHINGTON, HOWEVER, WANTS A BILATERAL GUARANTEE INVOLVING A CONSIDERABLE U.S. ROLE.

7. EVEN IF PANAMA IS NOW ACCEPTING--AT LEAST IN PART-- WASHINGTON'S MOST CRUCIAL DEMAND, THE WORDING OF THE NEUTRALITY FORMULA IS STILL A DELICATE POINT THAT MAY SET OFF NEW AND LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS.

8. ACCORDING TO TORRIJOS, THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE HAMMERING OUT ITS ANSWERS TO A NEW SET OF U.S. PROPOSALS TODAY. THIS MORNING THE PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM AND THE COUNTRY'S TOP MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS ARRIVED AT HIS HOME IN FARALLON, AFTER HOLDING TALKS AMONG THEMSELVES THIS WEEKEND. THEY WERE TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON TONIGHT TO RESUME THE TALKS ON TUESDAY MORNING.

9. TORRIJOS DECLINED, HOWEVER, TO DISCLOSE DETAILS OF THE PANAMANIAN POSITION, ADDING, "I CAN SAY WHAT WE DO NOT

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 112874

WANT. WE WILL NOT ACCEPT ANYTHING IN WRITING THAT CAN JUSTIFY AN AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN THE FUTURE.;

10. TORRIJOS WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE NEW U.S. PROPOSALS BROUGHT HOME BY HIS NEGOTIATING TEAM WERE 'VERY GOOD,' AND PROVED TO BE A POSITIVE TURN IN THE TENSE SITUATION THAT AROSE DURING THE TALKS IN WASHINGTON LAST WEEK. A PROBLEM AROSE THEN THAT ALMOST LED "TO A BREAKOFF OF THE TALKS," HE SAID.

11. ON WEDNESDAY, ACCORDING TO TORRIJOS, THE U.S. NEGOTIATING TEAM SUDDENLY PRODUCED NEW DEMANDS ON POINTS ALREADY AGREED ON.

12. "SO I TOLD MY PEOPLE 'THIS IS NO STRIPTEASE, WE CAN'T ACCEPT THIS. TELL THE AMERICANS THAT IF WE WANT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WE SHOULD ALL GET UNDRESSED TOGETHER.'"

13. TORRIJOS THEN REPORTEDLY INSTRUCTED HIS REPRESENTA-

TIVE TO RETURN TO PANAMA IN 48 HOURS IF THE UNITED STATES
"DID NOT STOP FOOLING AROUND."

14. "THE AMERICANS BUGGED THE TELEPHONE SO THEY MUST
HAVE HEARD US," SAID TORRIJOS. "THE NEXT DAY THEY CAME
UP WITH THESE POSITIVE PROPOSALS."

15. SEASONED OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THAT PANAMA'S REF-
ERENCE TO THE WILL OF ITS LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS MAY
PROVIDE IT WITH THE FACE-SAVING DEVICE IT WILL NEED TO
ACCEPT A U.S. DEFENSE ROLE.

16. TORRIJOS' INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO WIN SUPPORT IN HIS
EFFORTS TO GET CONTROL OVER THE U.S.-OWNED CANAL HAS IN-
CLUDED REGULAR CONSULTATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA'S FOUR
CIVILIAN GOVERNMENTS--COSTA RICA, COLOMBIA, MEXICO AND
VENEZUELA--WHICH HAVE CONSISTENTLY ADVOCATED HIS CAUSE.
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PAGE 04 STATE 112874

17. "THESE FOUR PRESIDENTS HAVE BURNED THEIR SHIPS FOR
ANOTHER MAN'S CAUSE," TORRIJOS SAID. "IT IS ONLY JUST THAT
THEY GIVE THEIR OPINION. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY ARE NOW BEING
SENT THE MINUTES OF OUR MEETING WITH THE AMERICANS.'

18. ACCORDING TO TORRIJOS, THE 'RIGHTIST MILITARY REGIMES
OF THE SOUTHERN CONE ARE PUSHING US THE OTHER WAY AND SAY-
ING THAT THE UNITED STATES IS ALREADY GIVING AWAY TOO MUCH.
WE MAY NOT LIKE AN AMERICAN ROLE, BUT WE WILL HAVE TO FIND

A WAY TO KEEP THE PEACE WITH THE REST OF THE CONTINENT."
(END TEXT) CHRISTOPHER

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